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Washington, D.C. - Congressman John Barrow (GA-12) praised the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today for quickly responding to the needs of our student veterans by providing emergency checks under the new G.I. Bill. Thousands of veterans who applied for educational benefits under the program haven't received their payments because of delayed processing and bureaucracy.

These emergency checks will help eligible veterans make their book and housing payments.

"Classes started weeks ago," said Barrow. "Veterans have earned these benefits, and they shouldn't have to dip into their savings or postpone buying the books they need to succeed because the bureaucracy is using outdated technology and doesn't have its act together. I'm glad the VA acted quickly to fix this problem.

The new G.I. Bill promises veterans excellent benefits, and now they'll have the resources to actually use those benefits.

I hope Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in the 12th District will take advantage of this program."

The checks for up to \$3,000 will be distributed to eligible students at VA regional offices across the country starting tomorrow, October 2. Students can go to one of the 57 regional benefit offices with a photo ID, a course schedule, and a certificate of eligibility to request payment of their housing and book allowance.

Veterans in Georgia's 12th District who cannot travel the long distance to apply in person at the Atlanta VA benefits office can apply online at www.va.gov <<http://www.va.gov/>> starting October 2. The online application will guide veterans through the process to supply needed information. The online applicants will receive their emergency payments through the mail after processing.

Student veterans can also request courtesy transportation to VA regional benefits offices. In order to get a ride, veterans should call their nearest VA medical center and ask for the "Volunteer Transportation Coordinator." Transportation will be on a first-come, first-served, space-available basis.

VA officials suggest that students travelling by personal vehicle or volunteer van should check their mail boxes and bank accounts before leaving home, since some veterans will find their checks have already arrived.

This money will be deducted from future payments, which are expected to arrive on the normal schedule - the beginning of the month following the period for which they are being reimbursed.

Last year, Congress enacted the new G.I. Bill, which Congressman Barrow co-sponsored, to restore the promise of a full, four-year college education for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. Qualified veterans were able to apply for the new college benefits beginning in May of this year, and started receiving tuition benefits in August, along with housing and book stipends which are paid retroactively.

Almost 300,000 claims have been submitted for the program.

A list of regional VA offices is available at: www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/offices.asp. The VA is working with Veteran Services Organizations to send representatives to campuses with large veteran student bodies to help students access the regional offices.

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